

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1, 3-20, 22-24 and 27 remain in the application.

Claims 1, 5, 6 and 10 are currently cancelled.

Claims 3, 7-9, 11, 14 and 15 are currently amended.

5        Claims 18-20 and 22-24 stand allowed.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC § 112

Claims 16 and 17 were rejected under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failure to provide sufficient antecedent basis for the limitations “the collar” and “the wedge” in claim 16, line 3.

10        Base claim 9 is amended to provide proper antecedent basis for the limitations “the collar” and “the wedge” in claim 16. Whereby the rejections as to claims 16 and 17 are believed to be overcome.

Claim Rejections Under 35 USC § 103

Claims 1, 5 and 6 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) over US Patent 4,629,150 to O’Callaghan.

15        Claims 1, 5 and 6 are cancelled, whereby the rejection is made moot.

Claims 3, 4, 8-14 and 27 were rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) over US Patent 4,629,150 to O’Callaghan in view of US Patent 6,023,910 to Richter.

Claims 3, 4 and 8 are now allowable at least as depending from allowable base claim 7.

20        Claim 9 is amended to recite the subject matter which the examiner found to be allowable in claim 15. Accordingly, claim 9 is now believed to be allowable.

Claim 10 is cancelled, whereby the rejection is made moot.

Claims 11-14 and 27 are now allowable as depending from now allowable base claim 9.

Allowable Subject Matter

25        The examiner is thanked for indicating the allowability of claims 7, 15, 18-20 and 22-24.

Claims 7 and 15 are allowable at least as being rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

Claims Count

The total claim count remaining after this amendment is: nineteen (19).  
The highest number of claims previously paid for is: - twenty-five (25).  
Claims in excess of the highest number of claims previously paid for: zero (0).

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Independent claims 1 and 5 are cancelled.

Claims 7 and 15 are rewritten in independent form.

The number of independent claims remaining after this amendment is: four (4).

The highest number of independent claims previously paid for is: - four (4).

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Independent claims in excess of the highest number of claims previously paid for: zero (0).

Therefore, the fee due for independent claims in excess of the highest number of independent and total claims previously paid for is: \$0.

15 If an excess claim fee greater than \$0 is due, the examiner is requested to notify the undersigned of such excess claim fee due.

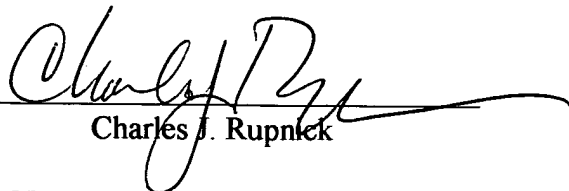
The claims now being in form for allowance, reconsideration and allowance is respectfully requested.

20 If the Examiner has questions or wishes to discuss any aspect of the case, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number given below.

Respectfully submitted,

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